

Please cancel the original abstract of the disclosure and insert the following new abstract of the disclosure:

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for inerting and protecting the anodes of fuel cells, especially high-temperature fuel cells, and a fuel cell system, in which, during a shutdown, when the supply of fuel gas to the anodes is interrupted, during emergency shutdown or standby operation, water vapor is supplied to the anodes, and an external voltage is applied to the fuel cells to produce a reducing atmosphere at the anodes by electrolysis. This makes it possible to inert the anodes of the fuel cells without having to maintain a supply of a flushing or protective gas expressly for this purpose.

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